

Tioga County Department of Mental Hygiene Annual Report 2020

Overview:

Tioga County Mental Hygiene continues to offer a comprehensive continuum of care for citizens of Tioga County who have needs related to Mental Health, Substance use Disorders, and/or Developmental Disabilities. Services continue to be challenging due to COVID-19, the ongoing changes in the Behavioral Health Care System, and funding at the Federal, State, and Local levels.

The Department was awarded a grant in 2019 from Care Compass for various projects including Tele-Mental Health and Tele-Psychiatry. We were fortunate to have had this ability at the onset of the pandemic. It has allowed county residents to receive treatment who were unable to access care - for various reasons, including COVID, and transportation- which historically has been a barrier for many.

The Department was also affected by the 20% decrease in state aid funding in 2020, yet, despite the many transitions, responsibilities for planning, budgeting, and oversight, the provision of services continue without interruption. The use of Tele-Health services was the primary service modality, for the majority of 2020. The department has been on the frontlines in dealing with the negative impacts that COVID has had on the overall wellness in our community. We continue to offer same day service / admission / and access to Medication Assisted Treatment. The Departments' ability to provide quality and timely care is attributed to system changes that included, uninterrupted on site staff / services, and a tireless, dedicated, resilient workforce. As many are aware front-line workers have also been impacted by the pandemic in various ways.

The Department has struggled with filling vacancies and recruiting qualified candidates again in the last year. Workforce recruitment has been a challenge due to expanding opportunities available to professionals, attractive salaries, and incentives not offered in the civil service arena.

We are very proud of our two coalitions that provide a valuable service to Tioga County. The Substance Abuse Coalition, **Tioga Allies in Substance Abuse Prevention (ASAP)**, brings new interest, awareness, ideas and support to the community through hosted and planned community events. ASAP also participated and provides several media campaigns. **The Suicide Prevention Coalition** started in 2012 and are involved in many community events that intend to increase awareness, train, and provide valuable information for help if needed. Both coalitions have adjusted the way they have delivered services to the community due to COVID.

The Department is charged with oversight, planning, and passing through funds to providers in Tioga County that are part of a continuum of care. Please see below.

Community Services Board

The Board continues to educate the Community about Mental health to reduce stigma. The Board is active in reviewing new policy as well as participate in the development of NYS Plan that the Director of Community Service is required to submit every year (was not submitted last year, waiver given due to COVID).

Community Mental Health Services

The County Mental Health Clinic provided **14,028 services in 2020**. The Clinic provides access to care in a responsive, coordinated, and timely manner. Throughout 2020 there was continued focus on engagement, retention, risk management, and consumer outcomes. The clinic continues to provide exemplary 24/7 availability of crisis services. Our OPEN ACCESS service allows individuals to be seen the same day, in person or virtually, removing the barrier of wait time, as immediate access is crucial. There is not a waiting list for Psychiatry. Unfortunately, we have seen an increase – double in suicide attempts – compared to the previous three years.

Aspire Hope NY (formally Pathways) continues to provide supportive services to families with special needs children. This year they have served many families and children within our county. Services include support groups, respite, in-home family supportive services, and recreational activities. The agency has moved to many services they offer – virtually.

Rehabilitation Support Services serve the seriously and persistently mentally ill adults in the community. The Community Residence provides a supportive environment for adults with a focus of assisting residents to function independently in the community. The Supportive Apartment Program provides a transitional residential setting within the continuum of community living. The Social Club and the Drop in Center have been closed since March, 2020 due to COVID. The Warm Line, a peer telephone support service, had a total of 2039 calls in 2020 – more than double the prior year. The agency also provides Health Home Care Coordination, which served 154 enrolled individuals.

Catholic Charities provides vocational services for Tioga County. OMH (Office of Mental Health Services) Extended Employment and ACCES-VR are funding sources for these two types of services.

Supported employment means competitive integrated employment, including customized employment, or employment in an integrated work setting in which an individual (including a youth) with a most significant disability who may be working on a short-term basis toward competitive integrated employment that is individualized and customized, consistent with the unique strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual. The goal of supported employment is for an individual to achieve employment in a competitive integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the individual's employment factors. A key characteristic which distinguishes supported employment from other employment services is the provision of ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities to maintain employment. Ongoing support services are provided throughout the intensive and extended phases of supported employment.

'Extended Services are the ongoing support services that are needed to support and maintain the individual in supported employment. Extended services are provided after an individual has made the transition from intensive supported employment services to stabilization.'

A New Hope Centers vision: a world where all people are safe, valued, respected, and free. Provides services to any person subjected to abuse or crime.

Tioga County Veterans –This year, due to COVID, specific efforts were increased for outreach, providing telephonic support, the Battle Buddy program, ZOOM activities, and drop in hours at veterans' service clubs. Veterans Service agency provides information and referrals to programs

for those in need and raise awareness of mental health, PTSD, TBI, substance use disorder and veteran suicide. Minimal public events were held due to COVID.

Unity House – Tioga and Tompkins County were able to secure funding for crisis diversion respite beds. This program is fully operational.

Substance Abuse Services

Tioga County Alcohol and Drug Services continue to be the primary provider of outpatient drug and alcohol services within the County. **During 2020, a total of 3,804** services were provided, despite limited group activity – this modality proved challenging. We have been on the frontlines in dealing with the negative impacts COVID – including increase in relapse and overdose. This year we were fortunate to have our own Certified Recovery Peer Advocate, who was instrumental in outreach and reengagement. Other services provided include jail evaluations, Alternatives to Incarceration Program, Driver Impairment Program, Narcan Training, and Random Drug Screening requests by Department of Social Services.

Trinity, CASA provides prevention, education, advocacy, early intervention and referral services to individuals, families and community in Tioga County. The program provides Evidence Based Programs within Tioga County. CASA staff are in Owego, Newark Valley, Waverly and Tioga Center school districts. In person education was limited this year due to COVID.

State Targeted Response (STR) Grant – Tioga County was identified as an area needing assistance in reaching persons struggling with opioid addiction. This grant chose two agencies – Trinity and ACBC to provide outreach, peer counseling, care coordination, referrals, short term counseling, and prescriptions. This program is totally community based – mobile model. The grant also allowed for a full time employee to be placed in the Tioga County Jail. The mobile teams continue to work very closely with many departments in our county.

Developmental Disabilities Services

The State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) vision that all individuals within their care have the right to live in the least restrictive environment and integration within the community continues to be supported, however, COVID has been a barrier in 2020. The OPWDD system has made many changes in delivery of care, provided many virtual services, vaccinated nearly 100% of congregate care individuals', and continue transitioning to Medicaid managed care.

The primary providers of developmental disability services for the County continue to be:

Franziska Racker Centers – offers a range of services including special education, clinical services, mental health treatment programs, residential opportunities, and community support services for individuals of all ages. Specialized services include evaluation, early education/intervention, family support, autism services, service coordination, and family resource program.

Achieve – provides the integrated employment program within the County as well as supported employment and habilitation services. These services are designed to assist eligible individuals to fully participate in the community through work or volunteer opportunities.